

## Agenda item 4a

### Regulator of Social Housing Inspection

<b>Meeting:</b>	Cabinet
<b>Date:</b>	21 January 2025
<b>Cabinet portfolio:</b>	Cabinet Member for Housing
<b>Report by:</b>	Service Director – Housing
<b>For publication</b>	

#### 1.0 Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet of the outcome of the recent inspection of Chesterfield Borough Council's housing services by the Regulator of Social Housing (RHS) and explain the next steps.

#### 2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 To note the outcome of the Regulator of Social Housing inspection.
- 2.2 To endorse the Regulator of Social Housing and Tenant Satisfaction Action Plan, as set out in Appendix 2, which sets out the continuous improvement activities to meet the Consumer Standards.

#### 3.0 Reasons for recommendations

- 3.1 It is important that Members are aware of the outcome of this inspection, and the plans for continued improvements in services to satisfactorily meet the Consumer Standards set out by the Regulator of Social Housing.

#### 4.0 Report details

##### Background information

- 4.1 The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) carries out inspections of all social landlords at least once every four years, to assess their delivery of services against four Consumer Standards, which are: Safety and Quality, Neighbourhood and Community, Tenancy, and Transparency, Influence and

Accountability. Further information about the Standards can be found on the RSH website: Regulator of Social Housing - GOV.UK.

- 4.2 The Regulator determines whether the landlord is performing at C1 level (the highest rating available, nationally only one local authority has achieved this), C2 (some weaknesses and improvement needed), C3 (serious failings and significant improvement needed) or C4 (very serious failings and fundamental changes required). The Regulator then works with the landlord to support them on their improvement journey, as all should be aiming towards C1 status.
- 4.3 Chesterfield Borough Council was inspected by the RSH in September 2024, and the outcome was a grading of **C2**.

#### **The position prior to notification of this inspection**

- 4.4 The Housing Service had been working towards delivering the outcomes set out in the Consumer Standards for over two years, and significant changes and improvements have already been made, including:
- A reshape of housing management and statutory housing functions which resulted in increased front line housing management staff and an expansion of tenant engagement opportunities.
  - A strong focus on landlord compliance and safety, and implementation of a robust monitoring regime.
  - Procurement of a new asset management ICT system to enable a more joined up approach to housing stock maintenance and investment.
  - A reshape of the Housing Assets service to further strengthen our approach to compliance (with dedicated named managers for each area), improve stock condition accuracy, deliver the investment programme and increase capacity to build and acquire new council homes and commission stock decarbonisation programmes.
  - Establishment of a Housing Advisory Board, which brings together tenants, Elected Members and senior officers to drive performance improvements with a focus on tenant satisfaction, complaints and compliance.
  - Launch of a Housing Property Services transformation programme, including a review of trades employees' terms and conditions, a reshape of the management and office functions, and procurement / implementation of a new repairs ICT system.
  - Approval for additional staff resources to deal with housing complaints.
  - Commissioning of an external contractor to address the backlog of empty council homes.

- Establishment of a tenant satisfaction action plan, co-designed with tenants.
- Strengthening of the Strategic Housing Board, which meets monthly to oversee performance, compliance, finance and service development.
- Review of the tenant handbook and website, in collaboration with tenants.
- A strengthened approach to dealing with cases of damp, mould and condensation and implementation of a monitoring and reporting system.

4.5 Some of these actions are complete and others are ongoing. These actions have helped to ensure the Housing Service is in a strong position in relation to the RSH's Consumer Standards, as our activities meant we were already meeting the majority of the requirements, are aware of areas for improvement and proactively dealing with them.

4.6 The notification of an inspection during quarter two, provided the opportunity for the Housing Service to review its self-assessment against the Standards more closely, reflect positively on how much progress has been made, and identify any further potential improvements.

### **The inspection process**

4.7 Following an initial meeting between the RSH inspection team and senior officers of the Council, a wide range of documentary evidence was requested and subsequently submitted to the RSH. The RSH reviewed the evidence, and confirmed the areas to be covered during the inspection.

4.8 The Council was then invited to submit any further evidence, and a timetable for the onsite activity was mutually agreed.

4.9 The on-site part of the inspection took place over three days between 10th and 12th September, and the programme of activity comprised:

- Observation of a Tenant Challenge Panel meeting
- Meetings with the Leader, Cabinet Member for Housing and Chief Executive
- Meeting with the Service Director – Housing and senior housing managers
- A range of officer meetings to assess services against all areas of the Consumer Standards
- Meeting with tenants
- Observation of a Strategic Housing Board meeting
- Observation of the Scrutiny Select Committee - Economic Growth & Communities

- 4.10 The inspectors had also attended a Cabinet meeting in July where a range of housing related reports were discussed.
- 4.11 Throughout the on-site inspection, CBC officers were self-aware, open and honest, and this was recognised by the Inspection team. Overall, the inspection experience was positive and supportive.

### **The Regulatory judgment of CBC's Housing Services**

- 4.12 As stated above, the RSH judged the Housing Service as being C2 graded. The published report is attached as Appendix 1, and a summary of key findings under each of the Consumer Standards, taken from both the formal report and from detailed verbal feedback provided by the Regulator, is set out below.

### **Safety and Quality Standard**

- Outcomes across all key areas of health and safety compliance are good and performance is actively monitored by senior officers, councillors and involved tenants.
- We are managing the risks associated with damp and mould and taking steps to adopt a more planned approach and improve reporting.
- We have a good understanding of our stock condition and use data to inform strategic investment planning.
- Good assurance was found in relation to planned maintenance and improvements.

#### Further actions:

- We will complete the migration of stock data from the current Keystone system, to the NEC Asset Management module.
- We will reaffirm our strategic approach to fire safety in the five-storey blocks at Flamsteed Crescent.
- We will complete delivery of the Housing Property Service transformation programme, to improve the timeliness of repairs and keep customers better informed of progress with their repairs.
- We will continue to deal with the backlog of void properties.

### **Neighbourhood and Community Standard**

- We work effectively with the police and other relevant organisations on a range of interventions to deter and tackle anti-social behaviour and hate incidents.

- We have appropriate policies and procedures to deal with antisocial behaviour and are following them.
- We have strengthened our approach to reporting on hate crime incidents.

### **Tenancy Standard**

- The RSH noted good assurance in general against this standard, including the action we take to support tenants to sustain their tenancies, and the fair and transparent processes we follow to allocate council properties.

#### Further actions:

- We will carry out additional analysis of the equalities and diversity data for new tenants, and regularly review the equalities impact assessment.
- We will improve the way we measure and report on outcomes from our tenancy support service.

### **Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard**

- The RHS noted that we are committed to treating tenants and prospective tenants with fairness and respect.
- We provide information in a range of formats, and work with our Tenant Communication Group to ensure information is accessible, for example the Repairs Handbook.
- The enthusiastic and positive approach of our tenant engagement team was recognised, and we provide a good range of opportunities for tenants to influence and scrutinise services.
- Our performance information is generally good, and the inspectors provided positive feedback on our tenant performance group and bespoke tenant performance indicators.

#### Further actions:

- We will provide more regular performance information and feedback on how we have responded to tenants' views – in a way that reaches all tenants, not relying on the website.
- We will improve the coverage and accuracy of data on tenants' protected characteristics.
- We have a robust approach to equalities impact assessments, but will do more in terms of going back and retrospectively reviewing them.

- We collect equalities data for tenants who have made a complaint, but will do more in terms of analysing and learning from this data.
- We will improve our performance on responding to complaints within timescale.
- We will fully embed a culture of learning from complaints, to improve service delivery.

### **Next steps**

- 4.13 The Housing Service is committed to working with our tenants to achieve C1 status, and the areas above will be prioritised in service and team plans.
- 4.14 A combined action plan bringing together the RSH feedback and the previously identified tenant satisfaction plan is set out in Appendix 2. Progress against these actions will be reported in quarterly reports presented to the Housing Advisory Board and to the Regulator, and also published on the Council's housing webpage: [Housing Advisory Board](#).
- 4.15 A report will be presented to Cabinet in November 2025, updating on progress with the actions and a review of the wider activity of the Housing Advisory Board during its first year (as set out in the Cabinet report on 16 April 2024: *Establishment of a Housing Advisory Board*).

## **5.0 Alternative options**

- 5.1 Not applicable as this is an update report.

## **6.0 Implication for consideration - Financial and value for money**

- 6.1 Some of the newly identified actions may have financial implications, and these will be considered individually as part of governance and decision-making processes, and reported on via Housing Revenue Account budget monitoring reports.

## **7.0 Implications for consideration - Legal**

- 7.1 The legislative powers of the Regulator of Social Housing are set out in the Social Housing (Regulation) Act of 2023.

## **8.0 Implications for consideration – Human Resources**

- 8.1 The majority of the actions described in this report can be delivered within existing staffing resources, however the Housing Property Services reshape

will have significant human resource implications and these will be detailed in a separate report to Cabinet in early 2025.

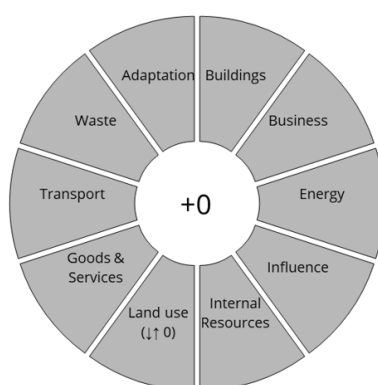
- 8.2 Housing staff will be invited to briefing sessions to ensure they understand their responsibilities and contributions to working towards a C1 standard housing service.

## 9.0 Implications for consideration – Council Plan

- 9.1 This contributes to two of our key priority areas - to improve quality of life for local people and to provide value for money services.

## 10.0 Implications for consideration – climate change

- 10.1 A climate change impact assessment was undertaken for this report. There will be no direct change to service provision or delivery from this report. The outcome from this is detailed below.



## 11.0 Implication for consideration – equality and diversity

- 11.1 Some of the actions in this report will help strengthen the Housing Service's approach to equalities and diversity, and equalities impact assessments will be carried out for service developments on an individual basis.

## 12.0 Implications for consideration - risk management

Description of the risk	Impact	Likelihood	Mitigating action	Impact	Likelihood
Failure to address gaps / failure to achieve C1 when the service is next inspected.	M	L	Robust action plan and regular oversight by the Housing Advisory Board  Ongoing relationship and support from the	L	L

Description of the risk	Impact	Likelihood	Mitigating action	Impact	Likelihood
			Regulator of Social Housing Continue to learn from best practice elsewhere		

### Decision information

Key decision number	
Wards affected	All

### Document information

Report author	
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Appendices to the report	
Appendix 1	Regulatory judgment report
Appendix 2	Action Plan